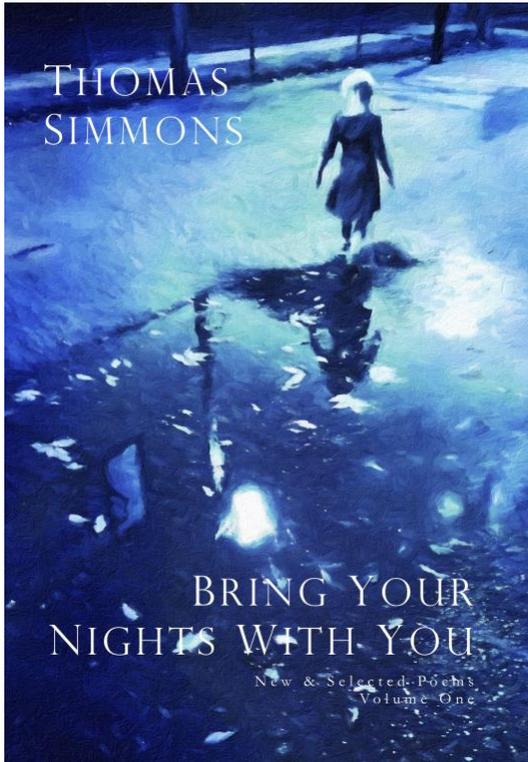


**Houston: Press Release** – Saint Julian Press is proud to announce a new book of poetry. *BRING YOUR NIGHTS WITH YOU – New & Selected Poems*, in two volumes by author Thomas Simmons, to be published in July 2018.

Praise for *BRING YOUR NIGHTS WITH YOU: New & Selected Poems, 1975-2015 – Volume One & Volume Two*



IT IS as if all of human experience, knowledge, and geography are encoded and distilled within this new double volume of poetry by Thomas Simmons, such is the tremendous conceptual, intellectual, and sonorous range of the work. The poet incorporates so much worldly perception and literature within these pages that it is as if the reader is being offered a vision of both human and unearthly existence at once.

It is as if the poet is foretelling his own life, but in paradoxical retrospect, such is the vivacious and vital nature of consciousness at work in these lines. It is a distinction of writing and awareness, of both sadness and fascination, as the poet's attention careers away from a *world before grave* towards an imperishable and indelible comprehension.

The poet says, *Among those I loved you were the first ... whose only choice was to prevent My ever reaching you;* and then later, *How to say good-bye when one has already gone?* Such sentiments are the mysterious and contrary threads that run through the fabric of this wonderful poetry binding the emotions and material detail into one strong medium, a tissue of song whose mastery lies not only in the expression but in its even greater indication of what cannot be said. Such is the *genius* of knowing the unspeakable and yet being competent and compassionate enough to endure that terrific and necessary effort which art can only imply.

—Kevin McGrath, Harvard University

There's a deep, rumbling power to these poems, a kind of wild but tempered energy that comes only when you're lucky enough to encounter a poet capable of weaving accessible narrative with vivid, well-crafted lyricism. There's humor, too, not to mention savage intelligence paired with refreshing humanity and political conscience. In short, Simmons has gifted us with a collection spilling over with my favorite breed of poems: the kind you can teach in a classroom, lounge with on a beach, or cling to in the waiting room of an E.R., confident that at the very least, you're in good company.

—Michael Meyerhofer, author of *What To Do If You're Buried Alive*

Thomas Simmons' collected poems are a burning—a wild search of blue flame, the kind with the least oxygen but the most heat, a kind that levels a landscape built on a range of religion, myth, philosophy, erotic intimacy—and aims to rebuild it with the act of looking at it with clear eyes.

From the shut-in child who says, "I began to calculate the area ... of my life" and "how much I had, in inches, millimeters, feet," to the reveling in the grown body's hidden ecstasies and "the rightness of the body in its rightful place," Simmons' poetry contains a watchfulness that is complicated by its own act of watching. It is a watchfulness aware of its failings, which vacillates from an undistracted mission—such as Muhammed who, with the "tunnel vision"

of religious fervor, only sees “out of the corner of his eye, the child Ayesha uncupping her hands and lifting the butterflies aloft”—to the full acknowledgement that any understanding comes beyond language, like the father and the child who take a wordless walk in the snow and discover “it had been enough, the sound / Of boots in the snow, the quiet, the sudden sun, Her hand in his.”

Simmons examines how human experience is best understood with tools outside of language, outside the relentless pursuit of assigning sign to signifier. There he says, we can find among the wreckage, “the beauty of it: my own circular ruins.” For it is the not “hard words that we train for” but its subsequent weighty silences, the aftermath, and after reading it, one is left haunted and unsettled by images—such as the child shaking in his loft bed during a hurricane busily loosening the rafters of his house—images that silence our chatter-filled mind as we recognize it, unfailingly, as ourselves.

—Leslie Contreras Schwartz, author of *Fuego* and *Nightbloom & Cenote*

Thomas Simmons is rumored to have said, “It’s in the nature of the human for trances to be broken. It’s in the nature of the divine for trances to be trances. The human doesn’t cancel the divine—just re-directs for a time.”

His two volumes of poetry represent decades of trance, as the collection flows in and out of re-direction and return, and as Simmons successfully mediates between subject of casual cognizance and participant observation of his own experience.

The poems in *Bring Your Nights With You* must have been strenuously hand-picked to accomplish the unexpected calling on the reader to arrive authentically at the work, *without mythologies*, yet to also leave the page with a sense of dogma, *just there, that new synaptic link, that thing, meaning*, arguably just as genuine as the consistent call here to re-learn the workings of light versus the unseen. We trust there is balance and truth in the path Simmons unveils before us, and there is.

A must-read for those caught in the liminal space without the desired benefit of *night goggles*.

—Rachel Sutcliffe, singer-songwriter, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Thomas Simmons taught for 24 years in the Department of English at the University of Iowa; in the spring of 2016 he started something new and has been writing ever since. Before that, he was an assistant and associate professor in the Program in Writing and Humanistic Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; before that, he was a doctoral student in English at the University of California, Berkeley, a Wallace Stegner Fellow in Creative Writing at Stanford, and a Stanford University undergraduate. His seven previous books, one of which (*The Unseen Shore: Memories of a Christian Science Childhood*, Beacon Press, 1991) caused some offense in Boston, may be viewed at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) site listed below. He lives in Grinnell, Iowa.

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